

Stories of Tomorrow: schoolkids and the conquest of Mars

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Abstract

Stories of Tomorrow is a EU-funded project centered on the creation of stories by schoolkids, ages 10 to 13, related to the exploration and colonization of Mars. With that purpose in mind, the project will develop and integrate various tools that will be made available to the teachers and students in the schools where it will be implemented. At the heart of the concept lies the vision for integrated curricula and deeper learning outcomes.

1. Introduction

The idea behind the Stories of Tomorrow project is to give ample room for young students to express their imagination and creativity in coming up with their own views of the future exploration of Mars. This will allow the integration of artistic expression and scientific inquiry, in a STEM + Arts framework.

It aims to contribute to the evolution of children's ebooks, through the development of user-friendly interfaces that will allow young students (10-13 years old) to give a free rein to their ideas and dreams about our future in space and on Mars by creating their own stories, in which can be incorporated AR, VR and 3D printing technologies that will aid in the visualization of those stories.

The creations of the students may take any form of artistic expression, including drawings and paintings, models and constructions, 3D objects, videos and animations, or science theater plays; they will also integrate sound scientific principles that will be presented to the students throughout the implementation of the project.

The consortium created for the project involves 15 partners from Europe, USA, Japan and Australia. It will cooperate in the design of a platform and the development of the storyline mechanism.

2. Activities

The project started at the beginning of 2017, and its school implementation phase starts at the beginning of the 2017-18 schoolyear.

There is a dedicated website already in place [1], that will have a role in the dissemination of the project.

The piloting phase will take place in schools of five countries in Europe (plus Japan), requiring a dedicated time-frame throughout the school year, and the transformation of the visions of the students into e-books that can be shared and viewed online. The plans call for the involvement of some 60 teachers and 3000 students of the 5th to 7th grade in the five countries concerned.

The teachers and students will have access to a wide variety of sources with information on space travel and the exploration of Mars, that will help in the development of ideas and concepts for the stories. They will also get in touch, whenever possible, with scientists involved in the missions to Mars, thus gaining a wider understanding of the issues and questions that they should confront when creating their stories. A Mars booklet will be produced and distributed, containing information on the history of Mars and its environment.

In the meantime, some activities to prepare and train the teachers in the approach employed in the project will happen. These include National Visionary Workshops, taking place in each of the pilot countries between May and June 2017; in July, a Stories of Tomorrow Summer School will gather teachers from all the countries involved, with the objective of introducing them to the concept of digital storytelling as a catalyst for the effective interaction between Arts and STEM disciplines which share similar value, similar themes and characteristics, and thus can be used to promote Deeper Learning in the students.

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References

[1] www.storiesoftomorrow.eu